3: Barth E-5 (1961) 1964 MA11 Ward MA11



[15] Where the case of marrying an unrelated, "stranger" girl is so high and the normative preference for near kin clear, the inducement for the young man to seek a bride among his cousins is evident. Consequently, the young man make the "right" choice though they appear subjectively to feel, and invariably express the opinion, that they are entirely free to seek any bride they might wish. The problem lies in the situation created when the motivation of the girl's father is, that he should forego his right to a bridegiven which, in the Kurdish System, can amount a minor fortune. Or put somewhat differently, the central problem is what are the advantages gained in this system by giving one's daughter to a brother's son which compensate him for the loss of the bridegiven.

The answer would seem to lie in the political structure. In the Kurdish lineage system, all groups are subject to a constant pressure towards segmentation and fission, counterbalanced by the interlocking circles of identification normally associated with segmentary descent systems (among the Nuer, territorial vs. descent groups, cross-cutting age-grades; among Tallensi, further the ritual collaboration between lineages, etc.). This pressure is particularly evident in factional activity within the villages, and changes in all functional descriptions of Kurdish life.* Kurdish villages are characterized by a constant struggle for political power on the part of a majority of the adult men, or those even women. Such political power is proportional to the number of alliances one can mobilize to support one's claims. In a patrilineal lineage system, a man can expect political support only from his agnatic relatives, those who by descent belong to his political sub-section; and the faction in the village used to be alignments of the younger men of a small lineage segment around an older leader. These segments consist primarily of brothers, sons, and brothers' sons. The solution to the latter is most critical, it crosses the line potential loss of alliance between collateral lineages. If a man alienates his nephews by refusing them their traditional rights, he loses their political support. If he, on the other hand, gives them his daughters in marriage, the ties are reinforced and lineage solidarity maintained. The girl's father creates an obligation on the part of his brother's son to give him political support by exempting him from paying the bridegiven. His other nephews can, in the lineage system, fill this role as political supporters, consequently they must invariably pay bridegiven. The transaction may thus be regarded as constituting a type of delayed exchange: the father receives political allegiance in his lifetime from his brother's son in return for the daughter which he gives him. In this way, the payment of patrimonial father's brother's

* Eg. C. J. Bak, Elements of a Sociology in Kurdistan (London, 1961); E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer (Oxford, 1951); Fortes, op. cit.

daughter's marriage payment to strengthen the political alignments of the lineage system.

In some villages there was a primary school, for example in Sulaka, Sarkan and Sargalu, but not by any means in all. In Topzawa and Rajawa there were no schools. Sometimes there could be a Quran school in connection with a mosque as, for example, at Sargalu, which children attended until their proper schooling began. As regards school conditions, reference should be made to Lungrigg and Ibrahim[1]. I shall here deal with the collection of the school in the homes where I stayed, the effect of some members of the family having learned, or being about to learn, to read and write.

As pointed out by Lungrigg and Ibrahim, the acquisition of book learning is marked by the fact that the passage of both primary and secondary schools becomes "the watershed"[2] in a community like the Kurdish. How decisive a watershed, can be seen if we observe the difference between working conditions in the schools arranged on the Western pattern, and in the Kurdish homes.

The school and exercise books brought home by the Topzawa sheikh's 12 year old son during the holidays appeared to be completely unacceptable foreign elements in the atmosphere of the home. In the first place there was no possibility of placing or keeping the books anywhere except in the wall niches, repositories for many household articles and quite unsuited to books. Nor was there any work table in this dwelling pattern, where all work was done on the floor. In addition it was impossible to read and study in quiet surroundings, for the homes offered neither space nor possibility for private life.

In my interpreter's home at Sulaimani, I found examples of the various training possibilities open to young women in Southern Kurdistan in 1957. My interpreter had been trained as a full school teacher at the 'Teachers' Training College at Baghdad'[3]. During her studies she had lived there as a boarder. The training here lasted two years. If the girl was to teach at one of the five 6 years primary schools which were beginning to be opened in villages, and three years if she were to teach in a corresponding school in the towns. My interpreter had taken the 3 year course, and was at the time I lived in her home, a teacher at the Gazida School for Girls opened in Sulaimani in 1956. At her home I was able to see how incompatible to the family's daily pattern of behaviour was the school work of her 16 year old sister, who after the summer holidays would have to pass an exam in mathematics to complete her 3 years intermediate school. Her school and exercise books, her pronuncer and rules, lay in the wall niches all mixed up with snips, glasses, medicines; she herself sat on the floor in a corner and tried in vain to concentrate on the circles and triangles she was doodling on the schoolbooks she was supposed to. Finally she left the home. With books and drawing instruments under her black abaya she wandered off to stay with her newly-married sister whose husband had left shortly after marriage to work in one of the villages. The whole life pattern, with two uneducated women in the home, where all contact between women took place in the home, conditions for working school children were decidedly poor. Where, as in Sulaimani's urban milieu, girls at school are absent from the home for many hours a day, their home training as wives and mothers is interrupted. If the half-grown up daughters were engaged in schooling and the adult ones were mothers, as was the case at my interpreter's home in Sulaimani, all cooking, washing and washing-up for a family of 10 persons devolved, except for the holidays, on the two uneducated wives at home. In addition there was the churning of grain and the baking of bread which in our culture is delegated to factories.

If, therefore, the working effort of the daughters is removed from the home, an imbalance takes

...object of the changeover is removed from the home, ex. children Khrd ...
...school for the whole remaining school. The distribution of work between the various generations
of women in the home, where the younger waited on the elder, is thus destroyed and replaced by its
converse. Also dissolved in the entire family hierarchy still to be found in the villages, where the
children from quite a young age take their due places, their duties increasing with age, a system based
on the serving of the elder by the younger, the boys by the girls.

Bishop[7] says that it is regrettable that Iranian children have no childhood. Langdon and Stratton[8]
assert that childhood in Iran is no definite age, but rather a matter of whether or not one is regarded
as adult. Accordingly, the time until the child becomes a small adult with responsibility was made as
short as possible.

In my opinion our culture and form of schooling places a far heavier burden on our children than
is the case among the Kurds. We isolate children from adults, both in regard to work and leisure, in
order that later they shall be able to harness the big demands made upon them by an industrialized
society. As a result the home becomes a type of service station, where everything is arranged for the
child to be able to attend to its schooling as well as possible in order to be equipped for the severe
competition facing it later on. The home does not become a place where the child becomes a member
of a small community, possessing to definite functions and duties, which gives a far earlier and greater
maturity than that provided by any amount of school attendance.

Among the Kurds it also appeared as though schooling was doing away with piety, and the younger
generation in Sulaimani seemed to regard religion and what goes with it from an historical angle.
None of the school-taught young men or women took part in daily prayers. Islam's heavy religious
demands on daily life would seem to be incompatible with attendance at school. But what can be

The position of the child in and outside the home

| Activity | Village Schoolboy | | Townsman | | Nomad's son | | Nomad's daughter | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural |
| Work at home | - | - | - | | - | | - | |
| Work outside home | | - | - | - | | | | |
| Schooling | | - | | | - | - | - | - |
| Short rest | | - | | - | | - | | - |

A woman or girl in all four Kurdish environments is overworked in the home according to age, whereby the girl acquires the necessary training in domestic activities. For the bigger girls also the charge of their smaller brothers and sisters, thus obtaining the required knowledge of child care.

In the case of girls of the Kurdish village milieu, also help in the work women in work outside the home, milking, thrashing of wheat etc. For girls in an urban milieu, both educated and uneducated, also school attendance.

The prominent feature of the boys training is the "street education", life with men outside the home. In a village milieu they take part in the men's agricultural activities, particularly the guarding of sheep and goats and the collection of fodder. In an urbanized milieu village milieu the boys are sent young to school to serve like Sulaimani and Kirkuk. In the two urban environments the boys attend local schools. Among the peasants the boy only attends school should there be a preparatory school in the village and in the event that his work in the fields and the shepherd's life.

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11



sisterhood that will provide that deep commitment of mind, the harmony of mind, that I came across in the village women who could neither read nor write?

The boys, even as small as 6–7 years of age, led in Sulaimani what we should call a street life. Playgrounds were unknown, corresponding to the fact that the attitude there was not that childhood should be passed in play. To give street life its due, it must be remembered that the men, so to say, live in the street, whilst the women and small children occupy the home. At work and at leisure boys and men spent their time outside the home. In consequence the boys obtained a street education among men, and we must return to ancient Greece to discover a parallel[39] showing the positive and negative aspects of this form of education.

The Coran, Sura 4, verse 1, says: "Be careful of your duty towards Allah . . ., and towards the wombs (that bore you)". This command is honoured to a high degree on the part of a son. To illustrate the intimate relations between mother and son, I once saw a young Kurd climbing up the steep hill to the small hospital at the Dokan Dam Site with his sick mother on his back, apparently a more comfortable mode of transport for her than a donkey or a mule[40].

## MARRIAGE

The limitations in the choice of spouse are found in the Coran[41]. A man cannot marry his own mother (or other of his father's wives), his daughter or granddaughter, his mother's sister, his father's sister, his sister, his brother's daughter, his mother-in-law or step-daughter. But, in addition, a non-marriageable relationship exists not only between blood relations and intermarried persons but also in respect of milk kinship, which is put on a par with blood relationship. As the law at the same time recommends that a spouse be sought within the family, marriage possibilities are cousins and second cousins, that is the descendants of uncles, aunts, grand uncles and grand aunts[42]. Of these marriage possibilities the cousin on the father's side is preferable and then the cousin on the mother's side. The terms in the Kurdish kinship system, purely descriptive indicating the genealogical distance between close relations[43], are: father's brother's daughter, *amidal*, (ortho-cousin marriage); father's sister's daughter, *pûrmal*, (cross-cousin marriage); mother's brother's daughter, *xalzâ*, (cross-cousin marriage), and mother's sister's daughter, *pûrmal*, (ortho-cousin marriage).

In the houses I stayed in I met in the village upper class the father's brother's daughter wedding which, according to Leach[44] and Barth[45] is that preferred by Kurds. In the sheikh family at Topzawa the wife was the daughter of the father's brother in Sergalu. In Sarkan two of the sheikh's three married sons were married to two sisters, both daughters of the father's brother. According to Leach the marriages of village leaders "tend to form political alliances" like the "Royal marriages of medieval Europe"[46]. In my experience this was not so, for the cases I met were the father's brother's daughter choice as common in Islam wrote.

It was stated that two families could exchange daughters. Both my interpreter and Sheikh Taiba's brother said that if the desired bride had an elder brother, a bride for him is demanded from the bridegroom's family. When asked, the 18 year old son of the Sheikh of Topzawa said further that a man in his village was able to marry anyone he wished. However, I do not think that too much faith

7: Barth E-5 (1951) 1953 MAII Kurd MAII

In the next life, Mohammad will pray for all dervishes, ask God to give them pardon. To become a dervish you must renounce all the faults and evil thoughts and acts of men, and always be good. Anyone can become a dervish — young, old, man, woman. So he went to the great Shaikh Kader. And the *Shaikh* advised him to be good, always; he told him to protect Islam, follow all the ethical rules, etc. He stayed only five minutes the first time — the *Shaikh* only takes your hand in his, tells you all the rules of dervish, and blesses you. Then afterwards, you pay him regular visits, as often as you wish — once a month, or every two months, or even once a year. Sometimes you give gifts to the *Shaikh*, though you don't ever have to.»

There thus seem to be no elaborate, much less mystic, rites of initiation to membership, as reported from e. g. the Persian area. The only visible sign of dervish-hood among men (who in fact form the great majority of followers) is letting your hair grow long — though there are, incidentally, no special taboos or precautions connected with cutting it.

The explicit logic and ethical position of the group, and the motivation for persons to join it, thus seem quite simple. Between the various dervish groups there is little room for conflict, since their differences are not dogmatic, but merely a question of the efficacy and greatness of the holy powers of one holy man as compared to an other. Similarly, except for the fundamental approach, which would rarely be questioned by the uneducated villager, there is no dogmatic conflict with the official church — the same ethical and ritual rules are propounded by the Derwish Leader and the mullah, and any further admonishments and elaborations introduced by the one merely serve to support this fundamental body of ritual. The more heterodox interpretations attached to this common body of ritual are generally overlooked by the mullah as lying largely outside his domain.

But it would be overlooking a very important aspect of the dervish organization if these statements were taken at their face values, and it were seen merely as a more emotional and personal interpretation of Islamic doctrine; as being a religion of the disinherited

7: Barth E-S (1951) 1953 9811 Kurd 9811

in the same way as are examples of the smaller sects of the Christian church. On the contrary, the theme of *power* is stressed and elaborated, corresponding to its importance in the Kurdish value system, and the more conventional religious possibilities largely played down. Great religious fervor is generally lacking among the villagers, even among dervishes. Fraser (no date), an early traveller in the area, notes with disappointment the lack of superstitions, fear of ghosts, etc. among his Kurdish friends. In accord with this, the point that is stressed is not contemplative or mystic, but might be said to be the aspects of potential power resulting from closeness to God, with great interest in the *overt* signs of this potential, covert power. It seems to satisfy the subjective needs of the underprivileged group, not by being an escapist religion of the next life, but by offering its adherents a powerful substitute for the highly valued political and economic powers they can not attain. To demonstrate the efficacy of the great powers they control, the dervishes rely on certain signs, the most important being their ability to do wierd and amazing things, generally feats of the type one associates with Indian fagirs.

The pattern of the delegation of this power illustrates something of its nature. It all centers in the *Sheikh*, in the present example Sheikh Abdul Karim. He belongs to the same family as Sheikh Mahmud, and traces descent as well as the origins of his powers through the revered Kaka Hamma, from whom also Sheikh Mahmud has received his sacred powers. The immediate predecessor of Sheikh Abdul Karim was his father, Sheikh Kader — a man of considerable influence and intellect (he accompanied Sheikh Said on their so successful visit to the Sultan, cf. p. 42). Succession to the position as Leader of Derwish is by appointment by the *Sheikh* himself. No rule of primogeniture is observed (Sheikh Abdul Karim is the second of three brothers), the person showing the greatest ability is chosen. This need not be a son, though it usually is — naturally, it must be within the family, since descent from the Prophet is essential.

There seems to be an unresolved problem here, in that the sacred powers are part of the ‹biological› inheritance of the descendants of the Prophet, yet vary in strength between different lineages of them. And these lineages may increase or decline in power over a

?f? ?5? practised as a communal rite in case of need, and gives the compe-
tent dervish an opportunity to reinforce his special position and demonstrate his control of power.

The actual rite is in rough outline quite simple. After an all-night session of prayer and purification on the part of the dervish, he is taken to a pool in the near-by, dwindling stream, and submerged in the water.

It is difficult to say just what degree of emotional intensity is involved in the rite so far as a majority of the participants is concerned. In the special case in question, they did not seem particularly impressed — the dervish involved was one who was frequently the object of mild horseplay, and the actual act of ducking him might have some appeal to the less serious minded. However this may be, the gravity of drought should not be underestimated, and would hardly be conducive to horseplay. The winter rains seemed to have stopped much too early, and the rite was a response to this serious
• [?:] situation. Considering this, the performance was probably more emotionally charged than some of the superficial comments might suggest, and certainly served to emphasize the unity and solidarity of the group. — It might incidentally be noted that this specific rite also was successful, in that fairly heavy rains followed shortly.

?f? ?.?? ??? Thus, this ritual of rainmaking is concerned with a very critical communal problem, and enables the dervish to assume a momentary position of dominant importance in his community. An interesting deviation from the stated norm was also observed in this case: the young son of the village *Agha* was submerged alongside with the dervish[1]). This equivalence may be significant in several respects. From the point of view of the dervish, it indicates the considerable extent of his momentary prestige — from a normal status of laborer he is elevated to temporary equivalence with the heir apparent of the village *Agha*. It may also illustrate something in the Kurdish conception of power: there is no really clear distinction made between the

[1]) The fact that the son rather than the *Agha* himself was chosen is best understood in terms of the slightly undignified situation, and the rather undignified appearance of the actor following immersion.

7: Barth E-S (1951) 1953 90.11 Gard 90.11

on a village level. Eliminating the cases of type (a), there is still ample evidence of endogamous patterns of non-Islamic or pre-Islamic origin, especially in the Caucasus-Armenian area, of which the Kurdish mountains are geographically an extension. The customary law of Daghestan prescribes close kin marriage, and explicitly forbids the marriage with an outsider (ibid). The early ecclesiastical laws of Armenia struck most-of-kin marriages with great vehemence (ibid. p. 14), and such practices caused great concern among the early Christian missionaries, till they were eventually ironed out. Thus, rather than regard the Kurdish combination of patterns as a labile state produced by cross-cultural mixture, it would seem reasonable to grant the Kurdish «tribal» organization considerable antiquity as a stable variant *or type* of lineage organization, of some theoretical interest.

On a structural level, it can be argued that a pattern of FaBrDa marriage serves to minimize the political implications of the lineage system. Solidarity to the patrilineal descent group in abstracto is minimal. Close family endogamy results in a direct correspondence between lineage segments and local groups, giving the descent groups a clear territorial framework in which the lineage organization can function. On the individual level, a man's political position and power depends in the last instance on the number of riflemen he can muster. However, only co-lineage males can be expected to give such political support. A pattern of FaBrDa marriage contributes to prevent alienation of immediate collateral lines, and re-affirms the old man's leading position in relation to his agnatic nephews, thereby vesting him with control over a larger agnatic group of males.

Where the lineage is found in other areas as a corporate group, it is usually connected with a kinship terminology of the *sibongo* type, which, through unilineal emphasis and classificatory extensions contributes in defining and delimiting these corporate groups. Kurdish kinship terms, on the other hand, are purely *descriptive* in that they measure genealogical distance between near kin. Nor do they show any unilineal emphasis. In other words, they do not contribute in any way to the definition of unilineal corporate groups. However, when this terminology is seen in combination with the

B: Leach E-S (1958) 1940 MAll Kurd MAll
Rowandiz



## [illegible]

### Warfare

Under present conditions large scale warlike activities on the part of the tribes are a complete impossibility, but that does not justify us in dismissing the topic of warfare altogether as being of no relevance to the present social situation. Historically speaking the traditional forms of Kurdish social organization are associated with an ideology of raids and counter raids, war, pillage and feud. Earlier writers have undoubtedly greatly exaggerated the extent to which the average Kurd in former times did in fact devote himself to warfare, violence and loot, but in describing this preoccupation they were, after all, only accepting the Kurd at his own valuation. The Kurdish ideal of manly behaviour does correspond very closely with the typical English concept of a "Brigand". The folk below are gay in the extremely big compromises hardly less so. And this has reference to the existing situation. The Agha likes to think of himself as a military leader rather than as a landlord; he habitually classes all his neighbours into 'friends' and 'enemies'. The consequences of this attitude are highly subtle and cannot be examined here, but at least two divergent trends can be noted. On the one hand the sharp antagonism between neighbouring groups is even today a force of social cohesion; the members of the clan or the tribe are aware of their unity largely in terms of their common enmity to some other group. On the other hand increasing economic contacts and the constant harmonizing efforts of the police and the Administration, in so far as they are successful in lessening intergroup suspicion, do at the same time serve to lessen the social cohesion of the groups concerned.

While organized raiding or warfare is now impossible the private feud continues and may be examined further.

### The Feud

The motif of the blood feud may be summarized by the phrase that "a man's revenge must be avenged by his kinsfolk and his descendants", and we may note at once that a system of small patrilocal, nearly endogamous groups is peculiarly suited to perpetuate antagonisms of this kind. The individual's near kinsfolk are also his near neighbours, and since his wife's kinsfolk are probably identical with his own he is bound by no ties of loyalty to any group outside his own village. Within the village all are bound together to resist the aggressor, beyond it everyone is a potential enemy, the identity of interest between the family and the village is complete.

Quarrels between villages may arise from a variety of causes, chiefly economic. Water and grazing rights are always ill-defined and may lead to serious friction in times of scarcity, and this may